

fought in this war. We need to be able to answer the questions of "How many veterans are ill?" and "Are our ill veterans getting sicker over time?"

We also need to provide a permanent statutory authority to compensate these veterans. That is why I have introduced legislation, S. 1320, that targets these important issues. It took our government 20 years after the Vietnam War to assess the effects of Agent Orange and 40 years after World War II to concede the problems of radiation-exposed veterans. We must learn from the lessons of the past and act. We cannot allow our Gulf War veterans to keep waiting for the benefits and care that they earned seven years ago.

Or take atomic veterans, who were exposed to ionizing radiation during service. I have serious concerns about the way atomic veterans' claims are being handled and the way regulations to administer those claims are being created. These veterans were intentionally placed in harm's way, sworn to secrecy, and abandoned by their government for many years. It is critical that we search for a better way to address their compensation claims.

I recently cosponsored legislation that would authorize health care for veterans treated with nasopharyngeal radium irradiation, veterans who have so far been excluded from access to VA services. These veterans, primarily Navy submariner and Army Air corps pilots, received nasopharyngeal radium treatments in the 1940's and 1950's to treat and prevent inner ear problems that developed due to the inadequate pressurization of their respective vessels. Unfortunately, the health effects of the treatments that were given to these veterans are unknown. However, when such high levels of exposure are sustained, we must be concerned about long-term health effects, and thus, we have a responsibility to ensure these veterans' access to health care. Simply put, it is the right thing to do.

We owe these veterans. They risked everything for us—their health and sometimes even their lives. We should, at least, give them appropriate research, health care, and compensation. At least.

An important issue concerning veterans at this time is the VA budget for benefits and health care. I would like to share with America where these issues stand.

First, the benefits side of the budget. The administration this year requested a very modest increase of \$565 million in funds for benefits payments, just what is needed to cover cost-of-living allowances. VA has also requested \$850 million—\$63.5 million above the FY 98 level—for the account that funds the administration of nonmedical benefits. Although these amounts appear to be an increase, VA's benefits delivery staff will lose 45 FTE. In a time when it takes VA 157 days to decide a new compensation claim, and years longer in appeals cases, it concerns me greatly that VA is seeking funds that will not

allow it even to maintain, at the very least, its current level of staffing.

I am particularly troubled by the proposal by the administration, adopted this very day by the Congress, which cut \$10.5 billion from the veterans' benefit account over the next five years. This was done by removing VA's existing authority to pay compensation to veterans who suffer from tobacco-related illnesses, based on the nicotine dependence they developed while in the service. The money saved from cutting this benefit will be put into more high-way spending.

Although I support a strong highway bill, I firmly believe that it should not be funded by cuts in veterans benefits, particularly a program cut that totally bypassed the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. That is why I offered an amendment to the Budget Resolution to protect the funding to the veterans account. Unfortunately, my amendment was defeated by a vote of 52-46.

On the health care side, the VA budget request for medical care is \$30 million less than last year. The base appropriated funding level of \$17.03 billion would be supplemented by approximately \$560 million from veterans' copays and collections from insurance companies. When the base funding level is combined with these collections, the VA health care system would have \$17.6 billion to spend next year—approximately what it is spending this year. Unfortunately, this flatlined budget makes no allowance for cost-of-living increases for VA employees and other rising costs due to inflation.

The VA health care system is a system in transition. Recent changes in lines of authority, resource allocations, and methods of health care delivery, as well as downsizings and facility integrations, have buffeted the system. While all this reorganization is underway, I am concerned that VA have good systems in place to ensure that high quality health care is the standard practiced at all VA facilities, regardless of where they are located around the country. I will continue my efforts to make sure that VA, as the nation's largest health care provider, upholds the highest standards of quality of care.

What is clear is that we still have a lot of work to do for our veterans. We have come a long way, but there are still many miles to cover.

They promised us they would risk their lives. We promised them we would take care of them. Caring for our veterans is the least we can do.

On this day, ladies and gentlemen, be proud of the men and women—veterans and service members from every branch and action—who have served our nation with courage. And, my colleagues, match your pride with a pledge to maintain the nation's commitment to them.

Veterans have earned our respect and admiration. I am committed to upholding their honor the offering them the

thanks they so richly deserve. I ask you, America, to do no less.●

LEHIGH VALLEY AND HEALTH NETWORK

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network, along with the American Nurses Association, who declared May 6-12 National Nurses Week 1998.

The theme of the week, "Nursing: Health Care With a Human Touch," was in commemoration of the ways in which registered nurses strive to provide safe and high quality patient care and find ways to improve our health care system.

The 2.2 million registered nurses in the United States comprise our nation's largest health care profession. The far-reaching duty of the registered nursing profession is to meet the emerging health care needs of the American population, while registered nurses' education focuses on restoring and maintaining the health of the individual.

Registered nurses will continue to be an important component of the U.S. health care system. They play an integral role in the safe, quality care of hospitalized patients, as well as contributing to the growth of home health care services and advancements in life-sustaining technology.

Mr. President, I commend Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network and the American Nurse Association for honoring National Nurses Week 1998. I ask my colleagues to join with me in recognizing the registered nurses who care for us all.●

PORT ARTHUR, TEXAS—CENTENNIAL RECOGNITION

● Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, on May 29th, I will be in Port Arthur, Texas, helping to celebrate the City of Port Arthur's Centennial Day Celebration as well as the tenth anniversary of the Golden Triangle Veterans' Memorial Park. Port Arthur, a city born at the dawn of the 20th century, enters the 21st century confident in its stride as a growing and vibrant community on the Texas' Gulf Coast, not far from my home town of La Marque. Port Arthur, a corner of what some call Texas' Golden Triangle, plays a key role in our national security by contributing to our energy independence through its oil exploration and petroleum refining activities. Nearly every American has benefited from the products that enter the world market from Port Arthur—petrochemicals and oil in particular.

The City of Port Arthur is named for Arthur E. Stillwell, originally of Rochester, New York. In 1895, Mr. Stillwell was searching for a site for the southern terminal of his proposed railroad from Kansas City to the Gulf of Mexico. He chose a site on the north shore of Lake Sabine, where Port Arthur stands today. The railroad to Port Arthur, which eventually became known

as the Kansas City Southern Railroad, was completed in 1897. The city of Port Arthur was incorporated on May 30, 1898, one hundred years ago this month.

The next year, the original ship canal to the Gulf was opened. Today, cargo tonnage out of the Port of Port Arthur averages about 23,000,000 tons per year. But it was on January 10, 1901, that the destiny of Port Arthur changed forever when a well dug by Anthony Lucas at Spindletop, only ten miles away from Port Arthur, struck black gold. Nearly a million barrels of crude oil are refined in the area daily, justifying Port Arthur's claim—"We Oil the World."

Today, Port Arthur is the home of three major refineries and the still important terminus of the Kansas City Southern railroad. The town of one thousand people a hundred years ago has grown to almost 60,000, and a diverse economy guarantees Port Arthur's growth into its second century. In addition to its energy industries, Port Arthur has become a year-round fisherman's paradise where thousands of anglers catch more than twenty-five varieties of freshwater and saltwater fish. Other popular local attractions include the Museum of the Gulf Coast, the McFaddin and Texas Point National Wildlife Refuges, the Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park, and Sea Rim State Park.

I'd like to talk for a moment about the tenth anniversary of the Golden Triangle Veterans' Memorial Park, which we will also be celebrating next week. This is the only park in the United States that recognizes all veterans, including those that served during times of peace. It was built by members of the community, financed and constructed through donations and over 55,000 volunteer man-hours. The park contains walls of honor for all our nation's past wars. The park's ten-year anniversary celebration is part of a week's worth of activities recognizing the Port Arthur Centennial.

I want to congratulate Jefferson County Judge Carl Griffith, Port Arthur Mayor Robert Morgan, Jr., and the people of Port Arthur on this historic occasion. Together, we look forward to what their community will accomplish in the next 100 years.●

RECOGNIZING PETE LYONS UPON RECEIVING A NEW MEXICO DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

● Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, every year, New Mexico recognizes some of their own citizens who have contributed to their communities in extraordinary ways. Today, along with the citizens of New Mexico, I am grateful for this opportunity to recognize Dr. Pete Lyons for his civic service. As a Legislative Fellow in my office he serves as my science advisor and during his time with me, I have benefitted from his good advice and diligent work.

Service to one's community can be expressed in many different forms.

However, it is rare to find someone as dedicated to so many diverse activities as Pete Lyons. He is a 29-year employee of Los Alamos National Laboratory while serving for 16 years on the Los Alamos School Board. Whether it is his scientific work, his initiative to help rural communities, his dedication to education and young people, or his work to improve policy in the international area, Pete shows the same integrity, insight and old-fashioned hard work.

Pete moved to New Mexico 29 years ago to work for the Laboratory as a technical staff member. He went on to serve in a number of management positions. In his career at the Lab he was the first Director of the Industrial Partnership Office where he expanded and created programs to encourage economic diversity in Northern New Mexico. He continued efforts to improve cooperation with the surrounding community through the Lab's office of Regional Economic Development and Technology Commercialization Office. Through a wide range of critical projects involving issues from telecommunications infrastructure, to telemedicine capability to improve rural health care, to technical assistance for water quality his work has been hallmarked by a dedication to the entire community both related and unrelated to the Laboratory. Since the Lab's beginning during World War II, it has been a stark contrast to the economy and cultures of the surrounding region. Through this work, Pete has helped to bridge that gap to begin a new era of cooperation and interaction for the Laboratory and the nearby communities.

In addition, I believe his service that is the most commendable is his active involvement in education. Pete recognizes that our children's future, our nation's future, is dependent upon the quality of our education system. During his sixteen years on the Los Alamos School board, he was instrumental in helping to create University of New Mexico-Los Alamos Branch College. He represented the Laboratory during negotiations with the local school district to form a foundation to provide financial support from the Lab and the Department of Energy to provide financial support for school districts where lab employees lived. During his time in my office, he has worked to bring attention to our nation's need to improve science and technology education so that America will remain competitive well into the next century.

Pete also knows that personal involvement can mean so much to young people. He has spent several years coaching soccer, sponsoring Boy Scouts, and serving as deacon in his church.

In a sense, Pete continues his civic service as a congressional fellow in my office. Over the months, he has proven to me his immense value to New Mexico and the nation. Whether the issue be rural economic development or nu-

clear non-proliferation, Pete brings thoughtful knowledge and keen insight to the table. He is willing to tackle controversial issues with a open mind and commitment to truthful dialogue.

I hope my colleagues will join me and my fellow New Mexicans to recognize this remarkable American.●

FRANCES C. RICHMOND MIDDLE SCHOOL: BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

● Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the students, teachers, and staff of the Frances C. Richmond Middle School in Hanover, New Hampshire for being recognized by the United States Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School.

Blue Ribbon status is awarded to schools that have strong leadership; a clear vision and sense of mission that is shared by all connected with the school; high quality teaching; challenging, up-to-date curriculum; policies and practices that ensure a safe environment conducive to learning; solid evidence of family involvement; evidence that the school helps all students achieve to high standards; and a commitment to share best practices with other schools. This honor is vigorously sought by thousands of schools across the nation, and only 166 schools are so recognized.

The Richmond School is part of the Dresden School District, the first interstate district in the United States. The school educates sixth graders from Hanover, New Hampshire, and seventh and eighth graders from both Hanover and Norwich, Vermont.

The curriculum of the Richmond School focuses on the academic, social and developmental transitions which take place at each grade level. Special care is taken as the Hanover sixth graders move from elementary to middle school, as the Norwich seventh graders join them one year later, and as the eighth graders take their place as school leaders and begin planning for high school. The Richmond School takes pride in the fact that students have individual schedules built around their choices for academic and elective courses. A foundation of their program is the fine and practical arts program, which allows students to choose from over 25 elective courses each quarter. Community service is required for all eighth graders to introduce students to the pleasures and responsibilities of contributing to their community.

The school has grown from 286 students to 460 students in the past ten years, and this has presented the school with a number of challenges. A creative and challenging administrative response to the growing student population has been to divide leadership roles among the staff. Rather than simply hiring assistants in the central office, the administration asked teachers and other professionals to take on the role of leadership in budget development, curriculum articulation,